

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND

The Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program (RISPP), in cooperation with the RI Department of Transportation (RIDOT) and the RI Public Transit Authority (RIPTA), sponsored this initiative. This planning concept emerged in Rhode Island in Transportation 2020 (2001 Update), the State's long range (20 year) ground transportation plan. A multi-disciplinary focus group met during the development of this Plan to discuss how this concept should be carried forward. It was subsequently identified as a strategy in the Plan to begin to connect land use and transportation planning as well as mitigate traffic congestion. Specifically, policy number 1-C states:

*“ORGANIZE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING IN RHODE ISLAND AROUND A TRAVEL CORRIDOR FRAMEWORK emphasizing coordination with land use and congestion management planning. Travel corridor plans will be developed in close cooperation with cities and towns located within the corridors.”*

Additionally, recommendations in the Plan, as put forth by the focus group are as follows:

- 2-6     *Organize transportation planning in Rhode Island around a travel corridor planning approach.*
- a. *Devise a multi-disciplinary, multi-jurisdictional corridor planning process that includes land use, intermodal facilities, multimodal transportation, travel demand modeling, existing capacity and infrastructure (to name a few) along with performance measures and fundamental data requirements.*
  - b. *Use the corridor approach as a framework to integrate Rhode Island's transportation planning into the interstate regional transportation systems of New England and the northeastern United States.*
  - c. *Recognizing that transportation and land uses are intrinsically intertwined so that one cannot be planned for properly without the other, undertake as part of transportation corridor planning coordinated, cooperative, and proactive land use/land management planning effort by the State and city and towns located in transportation corridors.*
  - d. *Upon adoption of corridor plans as part of the state guide plan, work with municipalities to insure that local comprehensive plans incorporate, and become consistent with, the recommendations of the Corridor plan(s) for which they are a component. Corridor planning will enable transportation planning to go beyond the municipal boundaries.*

- e. *Provide assistance to communities to enable their participation in a cooperative planning effort to support corridor planning studies.*
- f. *Integrate the State's Congestion Management and Air Quality planning process within the travel corridor planning process.*
- g. *Identify and prioritize travel corridors for study. Statewide Planning, in cooperation with RIDOT, will provide the results of this process to the State Planning Council for endorsement.*

Statewide Planning's Unified Planning Work Program, as approved by the State Planning Council and the Federal Highway Administration, includes this report as a program deliverable in fiscal year 2004. The Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2003-2004 also identifies corridor planning studies as an activity for RIDOT to undertake within the Planning Program. The Corridor Planning Initiative is a beginning to what may perhaps be a new framework for planning within the State.

## PURPOSE

Rhode Island needs to better integrate land use and transportation planning in order to preserve the capacity and functionality of the major travel corridors. Congestion and sprawl are caused in part by the land use and transportation cycle whereby a transportation improvement (such as a new or improved highway, rail line extension, or airport) creates increased land value and accessibility. Development, and often over-development, of residential or commercial uses follows, causing congestion, and driving the need for improved transportation facilities. The disconnect between land use and transportation planning is inherent in the structure of our government where transportation planning occurs at the state and federal level, but land use planning and control occurs at the local level. RI's practice of selecting transportation projects as submitted by municipalities does not fully take into account the regional scope of certain elements of the transportation system. Corridor planning can be used as a bridge between policy level state planning and more narrowly focused local plans. Specifically, this effort encourages:

- Multi-modal and intermodal analysis of a travel corridor
- Consideration of "upstream" and "downstream" impacts

- Regional communication and cooperation
- Land use<sup>1</sup> as well as transportation<sup>2</sup> solutions to traffic problems

The objectives of this initiative are to define major travel corridors in the state, identify major corridor planning issues, and begin to formulate a vision for individual corridors. The results of this effort will be used:

- To formulate objectives, policies, and strategies in the 2004 update of the long range transportation plan
- As a platform for more detailed individual corridor studies
- To prioritize projects for the Transportation Improvement Program
- To assist communities in making local land use decisions and identifying growth centers

## METHODOLOGY

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) of the State Planning Council helped to shape this study. Seven major travel corridors of statewide significance were identified. All 39 cities and towns are included in at least one corridor, and some are included in several. In many cases the corridors extend into Massachusetts and/or Connecticut. This was a multi-modal effort and was not confined to highways. Rail, bicycle, pedestrian, ferry, and transit were considered as appropriate. A small working group consisting of RISPP, RIDOT, and RIPTA staff, and others with expertise in regional planning was convened periodically to provide direction.

Following the initial identification of corridors, the following steps were completed:

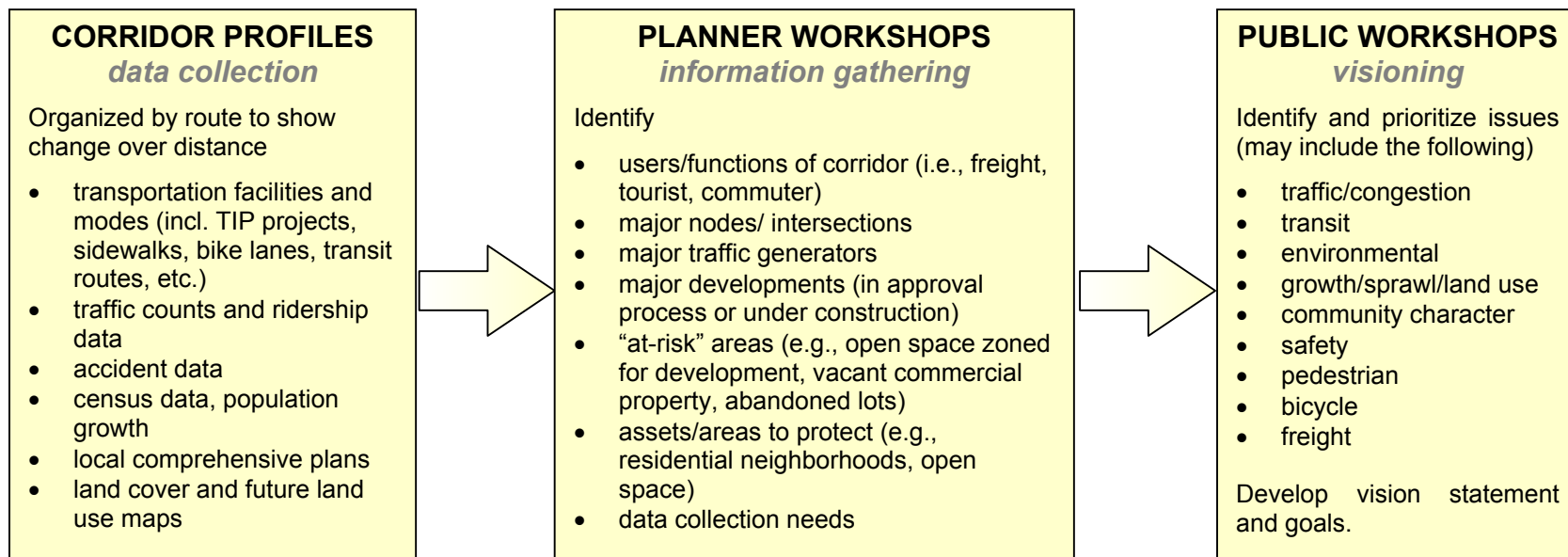
- **DATA COLLECTION:** Statewide Planning staff developed a PROFILE for each corridor. Although they are arranged by roadway (route number), they are multimodal and include information on pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities. They are arranged for the reader to better understand how the corridor changes over distance; for example, how the characteristics of a roadway (such as traffic volume and transit ridership) change as it proceeds from an urban to a rural area. The product is a matrix of major roadways in each corridor with data and characteristics for each town in geographic order.

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<sup>1</sup> Land use solutions may include: access management, zoning, land preservation, and transit oriented development.

<sup>2</sup> Transportation solutions may include: transit service, traffic flow and intersection improvements, safety projects, and capacity enhancements.

- **INFORMATION GATHERING:** The corridor profiles, land cover maps, and future land use maps were presented to local and regional planning staff at a series of **PLANNER WORKSHOPS**. The planners were then asked to identify important intersections and traffic generators in their communities as well as new developments planned or underway. Statewide Planning staff pulled this information together and mile-wide corridor land use maps for each major roadway. This local input provided a much clearer understanding of how the corridor functions. Clusters of new developments appear as areas to monitor in the future. The product is a map of each study area showing land use and the various activity centers.
- **VISIONING:** Following the planner workshops, a series of **PUBLIC WORKSHOPS** was held to identify and prioritize issues and generate goals and a vision for each corridor. Invitation letters were sent to local officials, chambers of commerce, and other interested parties. Newspaper ads were published, and press releases generated other media coverage. Notices were posted in key locations, including the State House and Kennedy Plaza. These workshops were professionally facilitated and included exercises for participants to locate their residence and place of work, as well as rate the importance of various issues. Over 100 members of the public attended the workshops. The corridor profiles and maps from the planner workshops were displayed. The products are aerial photographs and graphs that show the relative importance of various planning issues. Written comments were received during the process and are included in the workshop summaries. The figure below describes these phases in greater detail.



The results of this effort are presented in this report and can be viewed by individual corridor. The Corridor Profiles, Planner Workshop Summaries, Public Workshop Summaries, Land Use Maps, Aerial Photographs, and Vision and Goals document the course of the study. The vision statements as drafted are the result of a public process with input from professional staff. They should not be interpreted as policies of the state. The Conclusions Chapter compares the corridors to each other and makes some broad generalizations. It also identifies issues for further study. No specific recommendations were developed as part of this Technical Paper. This effort will serve as a framework for the next update of the long range plan and provide a basis for future development of policies, strategies, and performance based objectives.